

Sermon
Psalm 8
May 18, 2008
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There are two ways of being overwhelmed. Let me give you some examples of what I mean.

When I was only three years old we went on a family vacation. My parents decided that we would go to General Assembly for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Anaheim, CA, and we would drive. This vacation was almost three weeks long. On this vacation we stopped at the Grand Canyon and if you haven't been there it is a magnificent sight. Since I was only three years old I don't remember the Grand Canyon. The only things I remember from that trip is being afraid of the ocean, throwing my brother's hat out the window along with all the ashtrays in the van, and my dad strapping me into the front seat of the van. Because we had one of the vans with the three bench seats, he strapped me in, pulled the seatbelt really tight and said "now don't you move." I sat there in that seat as still as I could be until my dad pulled on to the highway and then I wiggled out of my seatbelt and crawled to the back of the van.

Traveling in a van across the country with five kids and one of them being a squirmy, mischievous, and active three year old, that's overwhelming!

So, I don't remember seeing the Grand Canyon when I was three, but when I was in college I went with the Disciples on Campus group to Arizona on a faith pilgrimage and on that trip we went to the Grand Canyon, and I remember that! It was mid-March and we were in Northern Arizona and there was snow on the ground, not a lot but some, so it was chilly. I had on long pants and a sweatshirt. I remember walking up to the Canyon and as I got closer it kept getting deeper and deeper, and wider and wider. It was beautiful and I was just amazed. This is the trip where my friend came up with a new definition for "awesome," meaning full of awe. That was the right word for that moment because we were in awe with the sight of this magnificent place, we were full of awe.

I remember that I sat on a ledge, not at the very edge, but few feet away and just sat there looking out over the Grand Canyon and just saying to myself over and over, WOW! I had my journal with me so I began to write and I began to pray. I continued my wows, and thanked God for this beautiful art work. Thank you for the colors of the rocks, the birds flying in the air, and the flowing water, thought it looked like a little squiggly line, I

knew it was a life source. As I sat there, full of awe, I began to cry... “if God can create something this magnificent and grand with the swipe of a finger, WOW! God is pretty big, and one incredible Holy Artist.” At that moment as I sat on the ledge and looked out into the Grand Canyon I was overwhelmed by the beauty of God’s creation and God’s greatness.

I think that is how the psalmist felt, overwhelmed with God’s greatness. Look at the opening and closing of the Psalm, “Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” I was just looking a small section of the Grand Canyon, think about the rest of the earth and the beauty it holds.

The word “majestic” is used to describe God. This word was used in the ancient world when speaking of royalty. The psalmist intentionally chose “majestic” because he wanted to show just how great our Lord is, the King, the royal ruler of all the earth.

As I sat on this rock over looking this massive piece of art, I began to realize just how small I was. The Grand Canyon is 277 miles long, ranges in width from 4 to 18 miles and it’s about a mile deep. I am only 5-10’ 1/2”. I am sitting on this rock thinking that I am only a minute part of God’s creation. “Who am I out of all of this that God cares for me?” The Psalm is speaking about the greatness and glory of God, “consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,” these words are praising and celebrating God’s greatness... There is another part of creation that points to the glory of God, and it’s you and me – it’s us! Listen to what the psalmist says, “What are human beings that you are mindful of them...yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.”... Seeing the majestic Grand Canyon, the beauty of a sun set, or the brilliant starlit night can take your breath away and all you can say is, WOW! Yet, it is God’s artistry in “creating us that comes the closest to reflecting the glory of God in creation.” We are created in God’s image.

Human beings reflecting the glory of God, that’s hard to believe at times. Especially when we look around the world and hear and see the killing, abusing, and the hatred one person inflicts on to another.... However, an incredible value has been placed upon us by God, the one who gave us life. God has, “crowned us with glory and honor,” and at times that glory has been stained and the honor has faltered – Psalm 8 is shouting to the people of faith to look to God and see just how valuable they are!

With being crowned with glory and honor by our God comes responsibility. “You have given them dominion over the works of your hands, you have put all things under their feet...” God is still working in the

world and we are partners with God in this extraordinary work. We are in a working relationship with God; we are stewards of this marvelous creation. One minister believes that Psalm 8 is “calling us to work toward establishing the true worth of every man, woman, and child on the face of the earth. We are called to bring the peace and glory of God to every troubled corner of our world.” This is a phenomenal task and the trust God has placed on us is amazing. It might even be a little intimidating to think we are responsible for so much, every troubled corner of our world? We are not going to save the world from every problem. We can’t help every person that is hurting, but we have to make an effort to help those which we are able to. We can give money to the Northern Illinois Food Bank who provides 1.5 million pounds of food to hungry families. You can help The Week of Compassion financially in provide relief to people all over the world who are suffering from disasters. You can give few hours of your time on the second Wednesday of the month to help serve a meal to the hungry at Community Social Services. You could start by walking next door to your neighbor’s house just to check-in and see how they are doing. There are several ways that we can take part in the phenomenal task of showing every man, woman, and child their true worth, but remember we are caring this task out in partnership with God.

This Psalm of praise reminds of us of the Greatness of God and the value God has placed on us. It reminds us of our responsibility to be good stewards of God’s creation. These words, “O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! Stand at the beginning and end of this Psalm, so let these words give you strength by letting them stand at the beginning and ending of each and every day.